

CANADA AND IMPERIAL DEFENCE

By

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AN address delivered before the Empire Club of Canada on March 15th, 1906, and previously before the British Empire League.

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TORONTO

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JDO not raise the question, "Should Canada contribute to the defence of the Empire?" for that must be conceded. Canada could not protect herself, and only exists as a self-governing colony, or nation, by reason of her connection with the Empire; so that to contribute to the defence of the Empire should be regarded not only as a duty but as a necessity.

The British Empire, with its vast possessions so widely scattered over the face of the globe, and its enormous business and trade interests, requires now more than ever in these days of alliances of nations a large and efficient navy and army to protect and to defend its possessions and trade. The following figures taken from recent returns* will show to what extent the British tax-

* Since the dates mentioned British expenditures have largely increased and other changes have occurred; but the principle remains the same.

payer is burdened in order that this army and navy may be maintained. The gross estimates for the navy for 1904-1905 are £38,327,838, and for the army for the same year £32,237,049. These figures are reduced in the case of the navy by a contribution from India of £103,400; the Australian Commonwealth, £200,000; New Zealand, £40,000; Cape Colony, £50,000; Natal, £35,000; Newfoundland, £3,000; and other sums realized from purchase of discharges, stoppages of pay, sales of old stores and properties, and other sources; in all about one and a half million pounds, making the net expenditure, £36,889,500. The army reductions consist of India's contribution, £416,000; the Colonies, £537,000, of which Canada's share is £22,100; and other sources similar to those of the navy, making a total of about £3,500,000; which leaves a net expenditure of £28,370,000—a grand total of over £64,000,000, or about \$300,-000,000. This gigantic sum is the levy for a single year only, and it has been frequently exceeded. Consider the heavy burden placed upon the shoulders of the forty-two millions of people who inhabit England, Ireland and Scotland. We, in Canada, contribute a little over \$100,000 to all this expenditure of \$300,000,000.

Let us now see what we do here. The militia estimates of 1896-1897 were \$2,413,-651, while those for 1904-1905 are \$3,995,-868, to provide for a total strength of over 49,000 of all ranks. The large increase noticeable in the last year indicates a movement to place the force on a better footing, more numerous and more efficient. This sum has since been considerably increased, to provide for the expenditure in connection with the taking over of the fortifications at Halifax and Esquimalt. This is a good sign, and recent utterances on the part of the Ministers at the head of the Militia and Marine Departments point to the continuance of the more liberal policy lately begun.

It is asked: What is Canada's duty, or how best can we contribute to Imperial defence? By this is meant the aiding of the Home Government in maintaining the integrity and peace of the Empire. It can easily be conceived that were a successful attack made upon the Empire by a combination of Powers, for no single power could accomplish that, the Colonies and outlying states would find themselves in a position quite unfit to resist for any length of time a vigorous invasion of their territory, & to prevent the destruction of their mercantile marine. Canada might be

reckoned among these, and so it is evident that we owe it to ourselves to do all we possibly can to back up and assist the Mother Country. I know there is a very general opinion held here that large grants of money would not be popular with the people of Canada. Money must be spent, however, if anything is to be done, and if spent judiciously, and other means taken, I think we can materially add to the strength of the defensive forces of the Empire without placing a heavy burden upon our people; a burden very light indeed when compared with that borne by the people of Great Britain and Ireland. To come to details, the following plan has suggested itself to me, and I have for a long time believed it to be the most feasible and effective.

(1) A small but well-trained and well-equipped permanent force, much as it is at present and, with the exception of the force now required to properly garrison the fortifications at Halifax and Esquimalt, wholly devoted to the training and instruction of the militia; the men composing this permanent force to be selected for their ability to impart instruction, the rate of pay to be such as to attract the class of men required, and to be increased with each period of re-enlistment, with the addition of a pension

at the end of a reasonable term of years. By this means the permanent force would in time consist almost entirely of instructors. I would also have a return to the old system of military schools for the instruction of officers. This I should explain. In the system at present in vogue none but those holding commissions in the militia are eligible to enter the schools of instruction, so that a young man must be first gazetted to a corps or provide himself with a uniform, at considerable expense, before he can take a "course," as it is called. The result is that most, if not all, of the corps are short of officers, and many of those in the corps are not of much use for commanding officers in their anxiety to complete their establishment frequently recommend for commissions young men who are not cut out for military work.

By the old system any respectable and educated young man, recommended by the senior officer of his district, could take a course and qualify for a commission without being a member of any corps. In the times I speak of—that is, when the old military schools were in operation—thousands of the best young men of the country took their certificates and were eligible for commissions in the militia. Were this system

reintroduced I feel certain that in the centres of education, where these schools would be established, a great many young men going from the different parts of the country to attend universities and medical schools would take the course in one of these military schools, while many others, after quitting their local schools and colleges, and before beginning a business life, would also qualify. It will be easily seen, therefore, how in a few years a vast number of young men in Canada would be qualified to hold commissions, and would thus take a greater interest in militia matters than they otherwise would. I would not advocate doing away with the present system of instruction, but would have that carried on in conjunction with the other.

(2) The training of schoolboys is a movement which I am glad to see growing, and it should be encouraged to such extent that, in time, to find a boy leaving school who had not received a military training would be the exception and not the rule. The Cadet Corps are rapidly increasing in number, which shows how popular such training is becoming. It might be asked: Where are the instructors to be found for the thousands of schools we now have in Canada, where, in a great majority of cases,

the teachers are women? I should say in answer to this that the return to the old military school system would soon furnish a large body of instructors; for these students and others, who would have qualified and returned to their own districts, would be competent and no doubt very willing to instruct the youth of the schools in their own neighbourhoods, besides furnishing an ample supply of officers for the militia.* Some simple and inexpensive system of rifle practice could probably be devised for use in schools and colleges. The adoption of this scheme would, in the course of time, if efficiently carried out, result in the majority of the male population of the country having a fair knowledge of drill, and, if a great emergency arose and their services were required, they could in a very short time indeed be quite sufficiently organized to take the field, the officers having been already provided for by the military school system. If the Government were then prepared to furnish arms and equipment a formidable army could be mobilized in a very short time.

(3) The recently avowed intention of

* Note.—Since this period the Stratheona Fund has been inaugurated and is proving of much value.

the Minister of Marine and Fisheries must have given much pleasure and gratification to those gentlemen who have so persistently and for so long been endeavouring to evoke an interest in the direction of a naval or marine volunteer force in Canada. There is no reason against, and many reasons in favour of, our having such a force. Material is at hand, and the young men residing along our sea coasts and lake shores could be found in sufficient numbers willing to form themselves into companies and squads if given the opportunity, and instructors could be found in just the same manner as they are now for the land forces, and all that would be necessary for their training could be as easily obtained. A few years of this latter line of action, if liberally and intelligently carried out, would result in our having in Canada a great number of good citizens pursuing their usual occupation for a living, and capable in a very short time of being fitted to take their places in the naval and marine forces of the Empire.

(4) I now come to the last item of the scheme I advocate. I think we owe it to Great Britain and ourselves to contribute from time to time one vessel of war to the fleet of England. A battleship is the high-

est type and, of course, the most expensive. Five millions of dollars is about what such a ship would cost.* But is that too much? One dollar per head of our population every few years until it could be safely said that we had done enough should answer the purpose aimed at. We should also maintain these vessels. I know this proposition may startle some people, but can we go on from year to year busily engrossed in our affairs, making a living and a good deal more in many instances, yet never thinking of our responsibilities. Disaster to England would bring ruin to many in Canada, just as with a community suddenly brought to face a conflagration which destroys all their property, because no appliances for extinguishing the fire are kept at hand, on the ground of expense.

It may be asked, omitting the contribution to the navy, how all this would add or contribute to the defence of the Empire? To that question I would answer that were any Power, or combination of Powers, contemplating an attack upon the Empire, their very first consideration would be a summing up of the forces they would have

* Note.—The cost of a Dreadnaught now would be nearly twice this amount, but cruisers are also useful.

to meet in the event of a war, and in doing this they would not overlook what share Canada would take in the struggle. No one with any knowledge of the spirit that animates the Canadian people would doubt what would be done by them in the event of the Empire being engaged in a great and serious war. Of the male population capable of bearing arms, and who could be spared from their duties as citizens, few would hesitate to offer their services in such a case, and should the struggle become more acute, and the position more threatening, more and still more would press forward. What occurred a few years ago during the war in South Africa must have shown foreign countries that in making an attack upon Great Britain they would have to reckon with the Colonies as well as the Mother Country. I will not say anything about what has been done by Canada in the building up of the country, and in providing the great facilities for its trade and commerce, thus encouraging immigration and adding largely to its population. I may refer more particularly to the lines of railway, present and projected, crossing and to cross the continent to open up the great West. A few years should see a great increase in our population in that part of the

Dominion, and if the methods I now speak of were in active operation in the older parts of the country they would soon spread to those newer ones, and Canada would indeed become a source of strength to the Empire; and would be looked upon as capable of adding a very formidable contingent to the other forces of our common realm. We should then be freed from the justly merited reproach that we are enjoying the protection afforded by the naval and military forces of Great Britain without paying anything for it.